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SUBJECT: ESTONIA'S SUPPORT TO KFOR ENDS IN 2010 BUT DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION CONTINUES

**¶1.** SUMMARY. Estonia will likely end its military mission in Kosovo in February 2010, but it will maintain a staff presence and civil assistance program over the medium term. Estonia's commitment to development cooperation with Kosovo has deepened significantly in recent years; over the next two years the GOE will complete an investment of USD one million in capacity building, sharing EU integration experiences, and development of e-governance infrastructure. The GOE has also made long-term commitments to the EU's Rule of Law Mission and will continue to seek ways to engage with Kosovo, primarily through the EU and projects of other European regional bodies. END SUMMARY.

ESTONIA COMMITS EARLY TO KFOR

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**¶2.** The Estonian Defense Forces have participated in a variety of peacekeeping missions in Kosovo since the establishment of NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) in 1999. This 10-year commitment to achieving peace and stability is all the more impressive considering it was only Estonia's second peacekeeping force sent abroad, and it occurred less than a decade after the re-establishment of Estonian independence and more than five years before Estonia's NATO accession. (NOTE: Estonia's first deployment abroad was to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1996 as part of NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR).) The First Estonian unit deployed to Kosovo, ESTPATROL-1, a military police platoon, assumed duties in November 1999 in Pristina under the command of an Italian Carabinieri regiment. ESTPATROL-14 was the final unit to rotate through Kosovo as part of this commitment, completing service in December 2006. On three separate occasions, Estonia also provided a company-sized unit as part of the Baltic Squadron (BALTSQN) rotation serving under the Danish Battalion for six-month rotations. In 2007, Estonia began a continuous rotation of an infantry reconnaissance unit, ESTRIF-1, from the Defense League (Estonia's National Guard equivalent), under the command of the Danish Battalion. ESTRIF-6, comprised of 26 personnel, is currently deployed to Kosovo. There are also five officers and non-commissioned officers serving in Kosovo in HQ and medical billets.

PARLIAMENT TO DECIDE ON EXTENDING KFOR COMMITMENTS INTO 2010

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**¶3.** ESTRIF-6 deployed to Kosovo in August 2009 for a six-month rotation. The legal authorization for their deployment expires in December 2009. A decision is pending in parliament that would authorize Estrif-6, with a maximum of 40 personnel, to remain in Kosovo into 2010. The mandate would last until June, although it

is understood that the unit will return to Estonia in February. In consultations with NATO, this is likely to be Estonia's last full unit deployment with KFOR. This same decision will also extend the assignments of the other five personnel through December 2010. National Defense Committee Staff Director Aivar Engel does not foresee any problems with the extension process.

KOSOVO WILL NOT BECOME ONE OF ESTONIA'S DEFENSE COOPERATION PRIORITIES

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¶4. After a thorough review of defense cooperation in Kosovo in consultation with NATO, Estonia decided it could add little value to ongoing Kosovo Security Forces training and defense sector reform. . The GOE also decided not to contribute to the NATO Trust Fund. Estonia has instead identified Montenegro as a priority for defense cooperation in the Balkans, as GOE efforts can have more of an impact there. According to Kadri Peeters, the Defense Ministry's USA Desk Officer, should the security situation in Kosovo change, Estonia may alter this approach, but in the meantime, it will probably only engage in defense cooperation and reform through activities such as the Nordic-Baltic Initiative.

BUT DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION BROADENS AND DEEPENS OVER THE COURSE OF  
TALLINN 00000353 002 OF 003

10 YEARS

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¶5. During the first nine years of its involvement in Kosovo, Estonia donated approximately USD 715,000 in support of a variety of peacekeeping, humanitarian and refugee relief projects. Even though Kosovo is not designated as one of the four priority partners for development cooperation, Estonia committed to USD one million in assistance over a three year period in July 2008 within the framework of the Kosovo Donors' Conference. These funds will be used to support a more clearly defined approach to capacity building at all levels of government. Estonia will focus this assistance specifically on EU integration and the development of e-governance know-how. Since 2008, three large Kosovar delegations have visited Estonia for training: two delegations of ministry and PM office staff, and one delegation of municipal leaders and officials. In total 57 Kosovars participated in these three visits. There are also six fulltime Kosovar students engaged in Master's studies at the Estonian University of Life Sciences. According to BJC6rn Piibur, the MFA's Western Balkans Desk Officer, consulting provided by Estonia's e-Governance Academy Program Director Liia HC\$nni to the Kosovo Assembly in 2007 created the connections for this support.

ESTONIA COMMITS TO MULTI-YEAR SUPPORT OF EULEX

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¶6. Estonia has made a long-term commitment to the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo) which became fully operational in April 2009. Currently there are eight Estonian experts monitoring, consulting and mentoring Kosovo officials, who specialize in policing, customs and the judiciary. The recommended length for each expert's tour is three years. While it is necessary to renew participation in the mission each year, the

Estonian government has no intention of ending its support in the near-term.

#### SOME CHALLENGES AND A BRIGHT SPOT

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¶7. In Piibur's opinion, the greatest challenge for Estonia's development cooperation projects has been a lack of capacity in terms of personnel, resources and legal mechanisms. As it is still a relatively young government, many of the officials with which Piibur deals are spread too thin, and quite often projects lag because of the need to put legal as well as physical infrastructure in place. Piibur is impressed, however, by the desire to learn and develop on the part of Kosovo officials. Estonians are delighted by the interest shown in e-governance across the western Balkans (most notably Montenegro, but also Kosovo).

#### THE BENEFITS FROM KOSOVO INVOLVEMENT

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¶8. Engel believes that Estonia's support to KFOR was definitely a factor that helped Estonia on its accession track to NATO. While perhaps not the dominant factor in accession, it was nonetheless an integral part of Estonia's strategy to show itself as a security provider. These deployments also helped build Estonia's capacity to cooperate with NATO allies. The Estonian Defense Forces currently numbers about 8,700 personnel (17,400 including affiliated defense league organizations) and provides an important complement to the 3,800 personnel that comprise the Estonian Regular Armed Forces. At a more strategic level, Balkan instability was and still is of concern to Estonia. Engel explained that instability could give Russia a pretext for intervention in the Balkans, which could further spark instability among Russian-speaking populations in the Baltics and Russia's other neighbors.

TALLINN 00000353 003 OF 003

¶9. COMMENT. In the near term, Estonia's bilateral engagement with Kosovo in the area of development cooperation will remain quite strong. Of particular interest to Post is Estonia's e-governance training with Kosovo and other development cooperation partners. We believe this presents an excellent opportunity for trilateral engagement and will be looking for ways to help promote Estonia's e-Governance Academy and other forms of e-governance training as a means to promote anti-corruption, more efficient governance and civil society development.

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